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CHAPTER III.
Mareened.

BOPP managed to make the engine run again and started to back off from the bar when the propeller wheel struck something, and proceedings ended.

That was the absolute finish of the performance for that day. He could not turn the engine over again, even by hand, and an investigation disclosed that the shaft was hopelessly tangled in some heavy wire which the propeller had picked up out of the sand. Bopp discovered this by sticking his head under water over the side of the boat.

"You might as well come ashore," said Lucile. "We'll have to get a mechanic."

So Bopp came ashore by wading in rather chilly water up to his waist. Considerable of the bloom was rubbed from his usual patty appearance when he clambered on the dock, besmudged and dripping.

"Welcome to the Fasters' club," I greeted him. "I would baptize thee as a brother in the Aqua Pura fraternity, but I see there is no need. We'll go up to the house and give you a nice drink of water to warm you up after your chill."

"Where's the telephone?" demanded Bopp.

"What's the matter?" asked Lucile. "I am going to telephone to town to have a boat come over to take me to breakfast."

"In the meantime," I requested, "would you mind moving over here a moment and dripping on these flowers, which need water?"

Lucile took him to the telephone. I followed at a leisurely pace, and by the time I got to the house I found Bopp whirling the telephone lever exasperatedly. It was one of those country telephones where you have to grind a little business on the side of the box until central hears you swearing at the transmitter. The operator seemed more oblivious than usual, and Bopp remarked "Hello!" in every possible tone of voice from wheedling to a threat.

"I wonder," Lucile murmured vaguely, "if maybe it wasn't the telephone cable which you dug up with the propeller of the launch."

"What's that?" Bopp demanded.

"I said, 'It must have been the telephone cable you got mixed up in when you ran the launch aground.' That's why it won't work."

He hurled the receiver into the hook. "Don't be cross," she said soothingly. "Think pleasant things. You've got to stay. Make the best of it."

"Think pleasant things! I do! I think of ham and eggs. Can you suggest something pleasanter? How far is it to the mainland?"

"Two miles."

"And I can only swim a mile and a half."

"Why don't you start anyway?" I said.

"Hush!" warned Lucile; then, turn-

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pose for ladies when they pull a fade-away." He sampled the "lady revolver" himself reflectively and returned the flask to his pocket. "I'm the telephone repair man. What've been doing to the wires over here? They been trying to get you from the main office all day."

I told him where the trouble lay, and he departed in the rain to patch it up. Shortly afterward Mrs. Greep opened one eye. She looked at me for a moment and then smiled.

"Ho!" your head steady a minute," she requested gravely. "Wanna see who's here?"

"I'm Mr. Blainey," I explained. "Everything is all right."

"Course it's a right. But I don't think I'll get up till the boat stops rockin'."

"You're not in a boat, Mrs. Green. This is your own home."

"It's a boat, I tell you. I guess I know when I'm seasick. Besides, at home ain't got so many pictures of purple sunsets."

"But there aren't any pictures of purple sunsets here," I protested.

"You're mistaken, my fren', there's two of 'em over there." She pointed implicitly in the arc of a circle which took in the entire opposite side of the room.

"I'll show you. Ho! this board steady while I step on it."

She gravely made an effort to rise, but, falling in that fell back limply into my arms.

"It's no use. Ship rocks so I can't stand up. Have to roll over there."

I tried to prevent her, but it was useless. She insisted on rolling on the floor. She was engaged in that pleasant pastime when her daughter and Mr. Bopp entered, dripping from the rainstorm.

I tried to pick Mrs. Green up. With a cry of alarm Lucile rushed to her mother's side, then started back, snuffing the air.

"Mr. Blainey," she cried in horror-stricken tones, "you've been drinkin'!"

"Don't scold my lil' fren'," Mrs. Green protested, patting my arm. "He's most beautiful fren' I got."

A light of understanding began to dawn in Lucile's eye.

"She fainted," I explained, "and a man who was here to repair the telephone gave it to her to revive her. It was too much on an empty stomach."

"Is the telephone fixed?" demanded Bopp, springing up. "Maybe I can get a launch to come for me yet."

The look which Lucile gave him warmed my heart and made up to me for the hours I had spent alone that day. He sank back into his chair.

"Will you call up Dr. Stone, Montmorency," she requested sweetly, "and ask him to come over to see mother?"

"Surely," I replied. I soon had the doctor on the wire. I told him that we wanted him to come over.

"I don't believe that it is possible," came the answer over the wire.

"Not possible?" I echoed. "Why not?"

"Haven't you seen the sea that is running? It wouldn't be safe for any kind of a boat to land at Green's island the way it is blowing now. You know the shore is very rocky there, and if you miss the entrance to the cove you'd be dashed to pieces sure."

I told that to Lucile.

"Ask him what we should do for mother ourselves," she instructed. "Tell him she has some fever and seems very weak."

I told the doctor what she had said and asked what we could do for the old lady until the sea quieted down enough so that he could come over. He told me, and I hung up the receiver.

"Well," Lucile interrogated, "what did he say?"

"He said—I repeated it carefully—"he said: Tell her to give her digestive apparatus a rest. Don't eat anything for twenty-four hours, and drink plenty of water."

Bopp laughed derisively.

The elder lady showed signs of interest. "Thass what I want—water," she declared, "plenty o' water. Blainey, beautiful fren', gimme some water. Have some yourself."

I gave her a glass of water, which she drank with variable relish.

"Best water I ever tasted," said Mrs. Green, attempting to put some in her eye under the mistaken impression that it was her mouth. "Blainey, be like me. Never drink anything stronger than this water an' you'll always be blithe an' gay, jus' like me."

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door and peered out. There was a man coming up the path.

"Who is it?" Bopp demanded.

"I can't make out."

"Maybe it's a man off the supply boat."

"Impossible," I explained. "The supply boat isn't due until tomorrow, and even if she were here they couldn't land from her in this storm."

The telephone repair man appeared.

"I guess I got to stay here all night," he announced. "The storm is getting so bad I don't dare try to row back to town. I don't care much for water unless it's mixed with something else."

Lucile came downstairs. I explained the situation to her. "Of course you can stay all night, but it will be impossible to give you anything to eat," she said.

"Why not?" he asked. "I don't expect to go to the trough with the family. I'll feed with the help in the kitchen without a murmur. As far as that goes, though, I'm a union man and as good as anybody."

"Certainly," agreed Lucile. "You are welcome to anything we have, but we have nothing. We are all fasting. We decided not to eat anything for a week."

"Bugs," he decided briefly; then, turning to Bopp and myself: "Gents, put me right. Do I or do I not eat at this station?"

"The lady has told you correctly," I assured him. "There is no food in the house."

"And you're doing it, too?" He laughed sarcastically. "When I come here the lady was pulling a Brodie on the floor, and now the fat guy ain't eating anything. A bunch of dips all right."

"You had better go upstairs and change your clothes," said Lucile.

"What will I change 'em into—a nickel plated wash boiler or a pair of diamond earrings?"

"I mean put on some dry things. Frank you and he are about the same size. You'll lend him a suit of yours, won't you?"

Sure he would. He had to.

When they were at the top of the stairs Bopp yelled down, "Monty, Mrs. Green wants you to come up!"

I started, but Lucile stopped me. "Ask her what she wants."

In a minute Bopp had the answer. "She says she isn't going to sleep until she sees her beautiful friend Monty. If he doesn't come up she'll come down."

Lucile, blushing, went up to explain to her mother that her request was impossible. From behind the closed door of Mrs. Green's room there issued sounds of an argument supplemented by weeping.

Eventually Lucile came to the top of the stairs and called, "Monty!"

How different that name sounded when she used it! I bounded up the stairs. When I saw "bounded" I mean it. It was the first time that I had done anything like that in years.

Lucile stood leaning over the banister, perplexed and troubled, her face flushed and her hair becomingly disarranged, as if she had been engaged in a physical contest of some sort. I stopped on the stairs below her.

"The blessed damsel leaned out From the gold bar of heaven," I quoted.

"Don't be silly," she said in a tone of voice that told me she liked it. "I have to ask you a dreadfully embarrassing question."

"All right," I commanded. "Shoot."

"Would you mind very much kissing a lady who is not as young as she was once?"

"Would I mind?" I said, taking her hands. "I've been thinking of nothing else for two years."

"I meant," disengaging her hands gently, "would you mind kissing mother good night? She is acting very peculiarly this evening, as you know, and she says she won't go to sleep until you kiss her."

I was touched at the old lady's fondness for me. We went in. She was lying tucked up in bed, with a nightcap tied firmly under her chin.

"Lucile made me come to bed," Mrs. Green volunteered, her bright eyes snapping with wakefulness. "It's all nonsense. Don't wanna be in bed. I wanna get up and go somewhere with you and eat."

"There, there," said Lucile, "the doctor says not to eat anything."

"Yes," snapped her mother, "and I'll bet he had just had his dinner when he said it. I know a place to eat over in town, beautiful Blainey—lots of fine steaks, chops and roas' beef. Guess I'll get up."

She started to throw back the covers, but Lucile forcibly restrained her. "You said you would go to sleep if I brought Mr. Blainey in to see you," she said.

The old lady eyed me with evident suspicion. "Is he going to kiss me good night?" she demanded.

I assured her that I was there for no other purpose.

"A right," she sighed; "then I'll go to sleep."

And she did, or at least we didn't hear another sound from her that evening.

When we left the room and closed the door softly Lucile put her hand on my arm and said: "Thanks, Monty. It was awfully silly, but I didn't know how else to quiet her. You won't think anything of it, will you?"

"Of course not. It's all in the family anyhow, or if it isn't I wish it were."

I hazarded, emboldened by the pressure on my arm. For the moment I could not have been any happier if I had been fed.

After a while the telephone man came downstairs in a suit of Bopp's clothes—light flannel trousers, outing shoes, fancy shirt, soft collar, tie and blue serge coat. The toga fitted him remarkably well, and except for a ver-nacular line of conversation the man did not seem ill suited to the clothes. At any rate, I liked him better than I did Bopp.

What to do with him seemed to be puzzling Lucile. It didn't seem right to ask him to go out in the kitchen and

drink water all by himself, and there was no other place to put him unless he stayed in the living room with us. Before she could decide one way or the other he seated himself comfortably and proceeded to entertain us with considerable conversation about himself.

"I ain't a Rube," he volunteered. "I've been near enough Fifth avenue to know good clothes when I see 'em, and I have to admit that Mr. Bopp is a swell dresser. I only work here in the summer time. In the winter I stick around within sight of the statue of Liberty. I'm a wire tapper."

"A wire tapper?" repeated Bopp. "Isn't a wire tapper a sort of crook?"

"Not compared to a burglar. Wire tapping is just high finance."

His name, it appeared, was Harold Kent. He was married, was a Social-

ist in feeling if not in theory, had been a jockey, a tout, a telegraph operator, and hoped to learn to fly an aeroplane. Otherwise his was an uneventful history.

All the time I was listening my mind was occupied with trying to account for the thrill which had jolted me when I had taken Lucile's hands in mine at the top of the staircase. I decided to put my fortunes to the test. I would sit up until Bopp went to bed and then ask her to marry me.

Kent, the telephone man, retired first.

"I think I'll sit up awhile," I said, stealing a look at Lucile and hoping that she would comprehend my intention.

"If you're going to sit up I'll stick," said Bopp, with Machiavellian cordiality. "I'll split a gallon of water with you."

There we sat, and we drank glass after glass of water until 11 o'clock. Then Lucile decided to retire and spoiled the whole game.

"I guess I'll turn in now, too," I suggested tentatively, hoping at least that I would get a chance to speak to her on the stairs.

But no. Bopp developed a sudden fondness for my society and accompanied me to my room and sat on my bed for awhile talking about affairs the-atrical, assuming that I was interested in them, which I was not.

When he finally departed the house was dark and the wind of the storm made unearthly noises around the eaves. I was more tired than I remembered to have been for years, but not sleepy. I don't know whether it was actual hunger or merely the idea that I had not eaten anything for forty-eight hours which haunted me. At any rate, every time that I closed my eyes I'd have a vision of those dog biscuits. I might just as well have pictured a chocolate cake or a doughnut to myself; but, no—it was a dog biscuit.

After an hour or so of that kind of torture I at last decided to satisfy my fool imagination by showing it a dog biscuit in the life and proving that it was not desirable at all. That was the only reason that I went downstairs.

It was rather ticklish business roaming around a strange house wearing no other padding than a suit of pajamas. I banged my shins unmercifully against several hundred pounds of fur-niture, but I toned my remarks there-at to a pitch below the howling of the storm. An occasional flash of lightning helped me momentarily from time to time, but left me floundering in the intervals.

Finally in the kitchen, I groped my way to the shelf, and the box of dog biscuit was in my hands. Furtively I took one out, fondled it and sniffed it. Being alone there with that unprotected dog biscuit was too much for my moral courage. I decided to throw honor to the winds. There was so much wind and so little honor that no one would notice it.

I set my teeth in the dog biscuit!

Suddenly there was a sound on the stairway. I listened intently—the creaking of a stair!

Who could it be? Possibly it was Kent, the ex-wire tapper. His early training might have proved too much for him and he had decided to loot the place and make his escape. I made up my mind to behave valiantly and grasped a dog biscuit firmly in one hand, determined to sell my life as dearly as was consistent with the high cost of living. The box containing the rest of the biscuit I put back on the shelf and crouched behind the stove, ready to spring at the intruder un-awares as soon as he entered.

I had one of those flashes of insane bravery which is nine-tenths fear when I saw the light of a pocket lantern straggling along the wall at the foot of the stairs. I jumped four feet straight up in the air when something wet touched the sole of my bare foot which was extended behind me as I knelt behind the stove. My exclamation was drowned in a crash of thunder. Burglar or no burglar, I was about to run to him for protection from that clammy thing which had touched me when a second flash of lightning showed me—oh, horrors! It was Tootles frisking around my feet.

(Continued Next Saturday)

ALED O AT A GLANCE

Daily Doings in Mercer County's Busy Capital

Barr Gets Commission.

Harry A. Barr of this city, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Barr, was commissioned second lieutenant in the officers' reserve corps of the United States army yesterday at Fort Sheridan. Barr has been in training at the second officers' training camp for three months. Lieutenant Barr will return home today, but probably only for a short stay, as he is to be called in a short time to active service.

Gene Graham Ranks High.

Gene Graham, son of William N. Graham of this city, was commissioned first lieutenant in the officers' reserve corps of the United States army at Fort Snelling, Minn., yesterday. Graham attended William and Vashti college in this city for two years and is well known in this city. He has made his home for the past few years in Minneapolis, and has been employed by the Great Northern Railway company as civil engineer for several years. Graham ranked 10th at Fort Snelling in this training camp. The first eight men were commissioned as captains and he was second highest among the first lieutenants.

Joe Cabeen Has Operation.

Joe Cabeen underwent a surgical operation Monday at the Mayo hospital in Rochester, Minn., for bladder and kidney trouble. Word was received here yesterday by friends that he came through the operation successfully and was resting easy. Mr. Cabeen had been in Rochester four months last Sunday, getting ready for his operation. Mr. Cabeen is a brother of Mrs. A. C. Sells of this city.

Romance Ends Thanksgiving.

Another college romance will end tomorrow (Thanksgiving) when Miss Helen Noble, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Noble, north of New Boston, Ill., will be united in marriage to Gerald C. Baldwin, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Baldwin, of north of this city, at the home of the bride's parents at high noon. Both Miss Noble and Mr. Baldwin are graduates of the University of Nebraska.

win attended William and Vashti college, where they became acquainted. Miss Noble graduated from Drury Academy and attended William and Vashti one year. Baldwin was in college two years. Miss Noble is a member of the Delta Sigma sorority.

Mrs. Sabbath Returns Home.

Mrs. Max Sabbath returned home Monday from Molina, where she had been confined in a sanitarium for several months. Mrs. Sabbath is greatly improved and it is expected that she will be able to remain at home now. She was accompanied home by her husband, Max Sabbath.

Personal Mention.

A. R. Burke left Tuesday for Smithborough, Ill., where he will spend a few days with his mother, Mrs. L. A. Combs.

Vincent Lemon returned home to Galesburg Tuesday after a short visit here with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Lemon.

G. F. Harbor went to Alpha Tuesday to attend the funeral of Ames Snell.

Mrs. G. W. Werts, Jr., went to Davenport Tuesday to visit her brother, Frank Werts, who is ill in Mercy hospital.

J. M. Nesbit went to Monmouth Tuesday to visit with his father, J. Porter Nesbit, who underwent an operation Monday afternoon for hernia. Mr. Nesbit is recovering nicely.

Mrs. Alfred Bowman of this city and daughter, Mrs. J. W. Anderson of Joy, were in Davenport Tuesday.

Elmer Wing of Wakarusa, Ohio, who has been visiting here with friends, left Tuesday for Peoria to spend a few days with his sister, Mrs. Frank Feltes and brother, Ollie King, before returning home. Mr. Wing was a resident of this city 17 years ago.

Mrs. L. R. McClellan left Monday for Lincoln, Neb., where she will visit her daughter, Miss Ruth McClellan, who is attending the University of Nebraska. She will also spend a few days with her brothers, George and Clyde McPherrin, of Lincoln.

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